

COUNTY OF YORK

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 30, 2000 (BOS Mtg. 12/19/00)

TO: York County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Daniel M. Stuck, County Administrator

SUBJECT: Application No. UP-564-00, Kenneth Dale Moore

ISSUE

This application requests a special use permit, pursuant to Section 24.1-306 of the York County Zoning Ordinance (category 14, number 6), to authorize the establishment of a mini-storage warehouse facility on a 1.74-acre parcel located at 5922 George Washington Memorial Highway approximately 300 feet north of the intersection of George Washington Memorial Highway (Route 17) and Wolfrap Road (Route 630) and further identified as Assessor's Parcel No. 29-(4)-4B. The proposed development would be an expansion of the existing Stor Moore located at 6000 George Washington Memorial Highway.

DESCRIPTION

- Property Owner: Kenneth Dale Moore
- Location: 5922 George Washington Memorial Highway
- Area: 1.74 acres
- Frontage: Approximately 345 feet on George Washington Memorial Highway (Route 17)
- Utilities: Public water and sewer service are available.
- Topography: Flat
- 2015 Land Use Map Designation: General Business
- Zoning Classification: GB – General Business
- Existing Development: None
- Surrounding Development:
 - North: Stor Moore mini-storage warehouse facility; Yorkminster Presbyterian Church beyond
 - East: Stor Moore mini-storage warehouse facility; Willow Lakes planned development beyond
 - South: Wolfrap Crossing shopping center, dry cleaning establishment and auto parts store beyond
 - West: Route 17; funeral home and law office beyond

- Proposed Development: Mini-storage warehouses

CONSIDERATIONS/CONCLUSIONS

1. The applicant proposes to construct four mini-storage warehouses containing a total of 93 units encompassing 20,450 square feet of floor space. The development would be an expansion of the existing Stor Moore mini-storage warehouse facility, which surrounds the subject parcel on two sides.
2. The subject parcel is located on Route 17 and thus is designated for General Business uses in the Comprehensive Plan. In discussing this area of the County, the Land Use element of the plan also states that “[u]nlike the sections of Route 17 developed prior to existing regulations, any new commercial development in this area should have greater green space and landscaped areas with an emphasis on tree preservation.”¹ In addition, Goal 7 of the Land Use element is to “Enhance the visual appeal of the County’s major corridors, particularly the Route 17 corridor.” As a means of achieving this goal, Strategy 7.1 identifies specific tools, including the following, that should be used to protect the Route 17 corridor:
 - preserving and protecting existing mature trees,
 - establishing new landscaped areas within existing and new development; and
 - maximizing building setbacks so as to provide opportunities for incorporation of green areas in highly visible areas and the retention of appropriate amounts of green space in the event of right-of-way expansion.
3. I have strong concerns about the views of the proposed development from Route 17. In 1996 when the Board approved a use permit for the existing Stor Moore facility, it was with the understanding that future commercial development of the property in front of the warehouses (i.e., the subject parcel) would serve as a visual screen of the storage units to the rear of the property (see attached letter dated July 25, 1996). Indeed, this was a major contributing factor in the staff’s recommendation of approval for that application. In my memorandum to the Board dated September 5, 1996, I noted that “[t]he mini-storage warehouse units are proposed to occupy about 60% of the site and are generally to be located on the rear of the site with a pipe stem extending to Route 17 to provide access. The remaining 2.1 acres extend across the bulk of the Route 17 frontage and the applicant plans to market this site to a retail or restaurant business. Once developed, that business will provide a substantial visual buffer between the storage units and Route 17, at least for vehicles approaching the site from the south.” The memo goes on to state that “[s]taff has long suggested that deeper commercially-zoned parcels could improve the development pattern along commercial corridors; this is an example of how that can work. By placing the bulk of the mini-storage units at the rear of the site behind what eventually will be some retail or restaurant use, the applicant has found a way to simultaneously have Route 17 exposure, but screen the buildings as well.”

In an effort to provide a visual buffer between the proposed warehouses and Route 17, the applicant plans to install at least a four-foot landscaped berm, supplemented by tree plantings, along the front of the property. However, the proposed landscaping (twelve crape myrtle) falls short of

¹ Charting the Course to 2015: The County of York Comprehensive Plan, Land Use, p. 85.

what the Zoning Ordinance requires for front yard tree plantings (approximately 18 to 22 trees) and, in my opinion, is not sufficient to shield two warehouse buildings measuring 150 and 100 feet in length respectively. Furthermore, I have doubts about the long-term viability of the berm, which would be located immediately adjacent to the future right-of-way of Route 17. At such time in the future as this segment of Route 17 is widened, VDOT is unlikely to allow the berm to remain in that location.

4. One of the conditions of approval for the existing Stor Moore facility is that both the office/resident manager's living quarters and the side nearest Route 17 of the storage building along the northern property line have brick façades. I recommend that a similar condition be applied to the proposed expansion because of the visibility of the proposed storage buildings from Route 17. For the same reason, I also recommend that all warehouse doors face the inside of the development; this will require a modification to the sketch plan submitted by the applicant. Both conditions are consistent with previous staff recommendations for mini-storage warehouse facilities. Finally, I recommend that freestanding signage be limited to the existing Stor Moore sign on Route 17. Because the proposed expansion would be on a separate parcel, the Zoning Ordinance permits a separate freestanding sign, but I believe that an additional sign is not needed and would further detract from the aesthetics of the site.
5. The proposed warehouses would be served by the existing Stor Moore entrance on Route 17; an additional entrance would not be permitted, and none has been proposed. This is one of the conditions of the 1996 special use permit, and it applies to **any** future development on this parcel. Another condition of the 1996 use permit is the requirement that a twelve-foot strip of land along the front of the property be reserved for future widening of Route 17, and this has been shown on the applicant's sketch plan.
6. One benefit of mini-storage warehouses is that they do not generate significant amounts of traffic. The Institute of Transportation Engineers Trip Generation manual (6th Edition) contains a wide range of trip generation estimates based on different variables (i.e., acres, number of units, number of employees, and gross floor area). Staff believes the lowest of these estimates – 26 average daily trip ends – is the most realistic. Under all estimates, A.M. and P.M. peak-hour trip generation would be fewer than ten trips. Although most of these would likely be **destination** trips (that is, vehicles that would not otherwise be on Route 17) rather than **pass-by** trips (intermediate stops on an employee's normal route between work and home), the traffic impacts of the proposed development are still negligible compared to most other retail uses that would be permitted as a matter of right.
7. The fiscal impact of mini-storage warehouses, though positive, is relatively low in comparison with that of other commercial uses permitted as a matter of right in the GB district, and the employment impacts are negligible. As the supply of vacant land along the County's prime commercial corridor decreases, the importance of putting such properties to a good economic use increases.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Commission considered this application at its November 8 meeting and, subsequent to conducting a public hearing at which only the applicant spoke, voted 7:0 to recommend denial.

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR RECOMMENDATION

Four years have passed since the Stor Moore facility was approved, but I still believe that the applicant's original plan to buffer views of the warehouses with some type of retail space was a good one. In fact, it is questionable whether a proposal to use the entire parcel for mini-storage warehouses, including over 300 feet of frontage along Route 17, would have been received favorably by the staff, the Commission, or the Board. I do not believe that the construction of warehouses in this highly visible location along the County's principal commercial corridor, even with a landscaped berm, is consistent with the comprehensive plan's vision for Route 17 or with the economic development goals spelled out in the comprehensive plan. Therefore, based on the considerations and conclusions as noted, I recommend that the Board deny this application. However, should the Board choose to approve the application, I recommend that such approval be subject to the conditions contained in Resolution No. R00-202.

Cross/3496

Attachments

- Excerpts of Planning Commission minutes, November 8, 2000
- Zoning Map
- Sketch plan
- Letter from K. Dale Moore to George Homewood, Chief Planner, dated July 25, 1996
- Resolution No. R00-202